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March 15, 2011

Testimony on Senate Bill 1, An Act Concerning Connecticut's Energy Future

I would like to thank the Energy and Technology Committee, Senator Fonfara and Representative Nardello for taking a bold and important step with the consideration of Senate Bill 1 and I speak strongly in favor of passage of this bill.

In line with the Governor's plans for consolidation of agencies, this bill brings together energy and environmental safety under one roof which will in itself save the State significant money and improves efficiency. While there is always a risk in combining agencies to lose effectiveness if departments are understaffed I hope careful attention will be paid to this issue.

This bill takes concrete steps to reduce energy costs to consumers, both short term and long-term and recognizes the particularity of low-income and elderly communities. I hope this will continue to include an Environmental Justice office within Environment Dept. With almost half of energy company consumers being at risk these measures are essential. At the same time, it provides several new opportunities for businesses and industries to participate in a clean energy economy.

I am greatly heartened by the goals set for DEEP in this bill to reduce consumer utility rates, provide a safe reliable energy base, increase use of clean energy, and expand the energy job economy. After the incredible recent world events these goals are ever more critical for our state's future. The strongest guarantee for a strong state economy remains providing jobs, health and education to people who in turn pay taxes, buy goods, create small businesses and remain in our state. While I do believe it is implied I think the goal of "reliable and safe energy supply" would be strengthened by adding "while reducing pollution".

I also believe public input and government oversight are critical to the success of all policy and I believe this bill makes some important improvements, giving the agency new responsibilities and providing a more objective process for evaluating needs in our state and providing services. State oversight of the IRP report is very important as well as leadership of important clean energy and efficiency funds.

Steps to enable clean energy and equal access to, renewables like solar, wind and fuel cells, etc. have never been more obviously necessary. People willing to take the risk of change to these beneficial clean technologies, including residential rate-payers, should also be given a fairer return for the energy they produce. The red tape and procrastination on building these industries must end.

Overall this bill is a healthy step to developing a rational and consistent energy policy with a balanced approach to encourage business and consumers.

A few last concerns: 1. old coal, oil and large scale hydro projects would be a step backward for a clean environment in fact today, old plants like these produce tons of pollution and do not even provide energy to Connecticut. 2. Large scale hydro can have serious consequences for our water ecology. 3. The scale of solar investment should be significantly increased not held back.

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